

2 Poems by Asha Viswas

A Riot Torn City

There is rigor mortis in the eyes of the city

The murderers have left no finger prints

Except a burning suburb

and its shadow on the unlit walls.

I still hang around the feverish river

but the face reflected there is not of this town.

The sadness in the sufferer's eyes has an edge

You cannot know the measure of tears filling the eyes.

When questioned, people shake their heads

and swallow all syllables.

I walk in a daze along the indifferent,

narrow footpaths, a busy crowd -

knots of old and young heads

hunched over tea cups .

I wind my way through quiet streets
Grey meets the eye everywhere
the sky is a collage of grey
and there is a patch of grey in every heart.

Every thing, everywhere so different from
The previous scenes. I have yet to meet
the wife of a friend killed in this riot
His death is the arched back of a question mark.

A Street Dog

(for Bob)

An umbrageous sun in a close sky :
A hot heaviness of East Indian June.
street dogs run in all directions
water dripping from their tongues.

Suddenly a dog cuts short his siesta

comes out of a gutter, stretches, yawns
and shakes his mud-varnished body.

The mud motes reach a foreigner's face
and embroider dots on a native's dress.

The white man calls the dog ill mannered
while the native woman snarls.

A human dog picks a stone and hits the dog.

The dog yelps, confusion in its innocent eyes.